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The Presbyterian Church

IN THE UNITED STATES

AND

THE COLORED PEOPLE

"Behold a Man of Ethiopia."

Acts VIII, 27.

BY REV. A. L. PHILLIPS,

Field Secretary of Colored Evangelistic Work.

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IN THE UNITED STATES.

("The Southern Presbyterian Church.")

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Behold a man of Ethiopia. Acts viii. 27.

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The Presbyterian Church

AND THE

COLORED PEOPLE.

Facts, a Basis for Action.

Facts are the fuel that feed the fires of intelligent zeal. The Church never realized her duty to the heathen until the facts of their condition were brought forth and laid upon her mind and conscience. In no individual church is missionary enthusiasm so strong as where the members study the missionary journals, and where the pastor is a sort of animated encyclopædia of missions. What then are a few pertinent facts concerning our duty to the Colored People?

The first fact is the *Negro himself*. There is not, and can not be any doubt as to his existence. He multiplies and increases steadily.

Whatever may be the fond dreams or elaborate schemes as to his deportation or colonization,

the fact is that he is not now ready for either, nor has any practical plan been devised for the work, nor could anything be accomplished in many years. So far as we are concerned the negroes are permanent citizens.

Religious Question.

This is not the place to discuss the negro's political condition, nor is it fitting here to enter into the question of his social life. These phases of his condition have already claimed, and have held a disproportionate share of the public thought. The sole business of the church is to attend to the religious life of people. Our consciences demand of our brains and hearts an answer to the question, "What is our religious relation to the negroes?" It is impossible to turn away from it, because God has thrust it upon us and keeps it before us. How shall we answer it?

Religious Condition.

What is the religious condition of the Negroes?

It would be very difficult to make a general statement that would cover the whole case. It is a fact that there are many genuine christians among them, men and women, who having an intelligent idea of the plan of salvation, and the demands of a

holy life, are earnestly trying to walk worthy of their vocation. On the other hand there are multitudes who, even if they exercise saving faith, yet know very little of the nature and demands of holiness. Again, there are vast numbers of them who have no saving faith, and are given up to wickedness. The last report of the Freedman's Board (Northern Presbyterian), speaks of the "separation between religion and morality, which is the supreme danger of the Southern black churches." In this opinion all persons that are informed readily share.

Preachers, Character and Influence of.

The best general conception of their religious state may be had by a study of the character, training and influence of their preachers. Here again general statements must be made with care, because there are many colored ministers who are truly pious and thoroughly educated. But the phrase "*Negro Preacher*," almost always provokes a smile or evokes a sigh. Amongst most of his white neighbors he is known to be *ignorant*. He no doubt preaches what he thinks he knows. His reading is (most) wretched. How can he expound what he does not understand? His ignorance does not clip the wings of his *ambition*.

He does not rest satisfied with the control of the religion of his flock, but seeks to direct their politics also. He is almost always a strong partisan *politician*. He seeks to rule his people with supreme authority. Instances are not wanting to show that he will exert himself to check any influence that tends to decrease his *autocratic power*. A negro of excellent character and great influence, who loves his race has said, that three-fourths of the colored ministers are *unfit to preach*. Another is reported as saying that of the ten thousand negro preachers in this country, only two thousand are fit to preach. A vast majority of the negroes cannot read; they are entirely dependent on their ministers for their religious training; they follow them blindly; shall not both fall into the ditch? Evils must be known to be remedied. No unkindness is intended when it is said that among the colored people, violations of the sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth commandments are alarmingly common. Let it be distinctly understood that there are many notable exceptions both among preachers and people to the above statements, which are intended to apply to average conditions. No surer and, certainly no sadder index to their moral condition can be found than the causes for which such vast numbers of them are confined in

the state prisons of the South. The inspectors of convicts for Alabama, report Sept 30, 1888:

Of the state convicts now on hand, there are

White males, - - -	81
White females, - - - -	5
Negro males, - - -	616
Negro females, - - - -	38
Total, - - -	740

These figures do not include county convicts. Of 596 convicts in a certain list 539 are black, of these 539 blacks, 182 or 33 per cent were sentenced for violating the sixth commandment; 51 or 9 per cent for violating the seventh; and 316 or 58 per cent for violating the eighth. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only known remedy for such a state of facts.

Our Church. The second fact worthy of special note is the existence of our church in close daily contact with the negroes. We are no longer a small body of christians, nor are we weak, nor does poverty consume us. We are alive, awake, and at word. The methods and results of our missionary work compare favorably with those of any denomination. Is it not a fact that we have too much neglected these people that the providence of God has put at our doors?

Relation of Facts.

What is the relation of our Church to the colored people?

1. We are *nearer* each other. This nearness necessarily begets knowledge. It would be very difficult for an intelligent member of the Southern Presbyterian Church *to keep from knowing* a great deal about the condition of the colored folks.

2. As matters are now we are obliged to come in *business contact* with them daily, almost hourly.

3. We have far *more knowledge* than they.

4. There is a present possibility among us of possessing *more spiritual force.*

5. We have vastly greater stores of *wealth* than they.

6. We are deeply *interested* in them. Their happiness is necessarily dependent on our good will; our happiness will be a dream without their good will. It cannot be otherwise.

Our Church Recognizes the Responsibility.

The Southern Presbyterian Church has never refused to recognize her responsibility for the evangelization of the negroes. At the meeting of the first General Assembly in 1861, slavery, their religious instruc-

tion was considered, and at almost every meeting since then, the attention of the churches has been directed to it. Various schemes were proposed and some of them adopted. It was not however, until the Assembly of 1874 (*vide* Alexander's Digest, pp. 162, 163), that a definite policy was adopted, which remains until to-day.

Our Policy. It may be briefly stated thus: *Our Church is resolved in the establishment and development of a separate, independent, self-sustaining Colored Presbyterian Church, ministered to by colored preachers of approved piety and such training as shall best suit them for their actual life work.*

This aid we hope to give in the form of sympathetic, practical counsel, liberal offerings of money, and training for their ministers.

Its Wisdom. We claim that this course is *wise*, because

1. It will earliest lead to a manly spirit of independence on the part of the colored christians themselves.

2. It will remove the reproach of their fellow christians that they are a mere annex to the white church. There can be but little doubt that the grand proportions of the colored Baptist and Methodist Churches are largely due to their

independence and separate corporate existence.

3. They *ask* for it. Within a few months the colored Presbyterians of the Synods of Alabama and Mississippi have most respectfully petitioned those bodies to allow them to form Presbyteries for themselves.

Its Necessity. *As matters now stand*, without attempting to justify or to condemn the state of affairs, it will be impossible for Presbyterians to reach them satisfactorily without separate organizations. Whatever their theory, in practice most churches pursue this policy.

Our Method of Work. *The New York Evangelist* of July 24, 1890, declares editorially, "The Southern people understand the negro character better than we do, and the christian people of the South, whatever be their views of slavery or the war, are just as sincere in their desire for the salvation of their former servants as we are. Multitudes of them like Mrs. Mason (of Brooklyn, N. Y.), have a zeal and a tenderness in their behalf that we do not begin to approach." These are sincere and true words. This superior knowledge and this sincere sympathy for the negro's condition, best fit the Southern christian

for this work. To meet the demands of the case we have established the *Colored Evangelistic Fund*, the collection and disbursement of which are committed to the Assembly's Executive Committee of Home Missions, stationed in Atlanta, Ga. Two departments of work are dependent on this fund:

1. Tuscaloosa Institute.
2. Sustentation of Colored Ministers.

1. Tuscaloosa Institute. In 1875, in answer to an "overture from Rev. C. A. Stillman, D. D., and others," the General Assembly referred the question of the establishment of a school for the training of colored ministers to a special committee. In 1876 a plan for such a school was adopted. In 1877 the school was located at Tuscaloosa, Ala., and opened for work.

Its Management. This Institute is under the control of the General Assembly, but its work is directed by the "Executive Committee for the Education of a Colored Ministry." Its actual work and discipline are conducted by Revs. C. A. Stillman, D. D., J. G. Praigg and R. B. McAlpine, men who are trusted, loved and honored wherever known.

Building. The Assembly owns the lot and building, which are more valuable than when first purchased. The building is of wood, and contains three rooms, two of which are recitation rooms, while the other is used as a library. It is furnished with convenient desks, maps, etc. The library contains 1,500 volumes, the gifts of interested friends.

Course of Instruction. The course of instruction covers a period of four years. Such branches of learning are taught as experience shows to be most helpful to the student, and most useful to his life work. The whole instruction centers about the English Bible. The standards of our faith are systematically and thoroughly taught. Instruction in Latin and Greek will be given at the discretion of the faculty.

Method of Teaching. The teaching is mainly from text books, which the students are required to study very thoroughly. Each Saturday and Monday are devoted to the preparation and delivery of sermons, and to other matters that will be helpful to them. Conferences upon various lines of pastoral work are held with the faculty. An

earnest effort is made to teach the men to think for themselves.

Discipline. Discipline is most thoroughly attended to. A young man's course at the Institute is made a season for the development of right living. Vigilence, firmness, promptness, justice and sympathy characterize the dealings of the faculty with all the students.

Cost. There is no charge for tuition to any properly qualified colored candidate for the ministry. The Church pays the cost of the board, medical attendance, fuel and text books of *Presbyterians only*. The student either furnish their own clothes, or are provided by the free and frequent distribution of clothing, the gift of friends of the cause far and near. During the fourteen years of its existence, the Institute has cost $40,120.85, which has paid all salaries, all tuition of every student, the cost of the lot and building, the board, fuel, medical attendance and text books of Presbyterian candidates.

Results. Total of Students. The whole number of students from the beginning to date is 134; of whom 75 have been Presbyterians, 14 Baptists, and

45 Methodists. Of the twenty-four colored ministers and licentiates now in connection with our church, nineteen have attended the Institute. Besides these, many of the ministers of the Independent Colored Presbyteries of North and South Carolina and Texas have been trained there and are now supported by our friends.

Missionary to Africa. The *first and only* missionaries from the Presbyterian Churches in the United States, to the Congo Free State, Revs. S. N. Lapsley and W. H. Shepherd, have been sent from our church. The latter of these is a colored man, and was trained at the Institute. A student there now has expressed a desire to go to Africa.

Testimony of Church Courts and of Others. The uniform testimony from the Presbyteries of our Church that have examined its graduates, is that they show careful training, creditable attainments in sound learning, and good preaching ability. Gentlemen in every way competent to judge, say that its work is as good *of its kind* as is done any where in the South.

The Men Themselves. The best proof that the work is well done, is to be found in the men themselves, and the work that they are doing. Coming to the school possessed of the merest rudiments of learning and untrained to think or to speak, they are graduated able to write intelligently, to speak effectively, and to think accurately. Some of the graduates are excellent preachers.

A Just Claim. *It is justly claimed for this Institute, that its teachers take men whose nature and powers they thoroughly understand, and fit them for conditions of labor equally well understood.*

2. Colored Evangelistic Fund, Sustentation of Colored Churches. When a colored man is graduated from Tuscaloosa Institute, licensed or ordained to preach, the only work open to him is amongst colored people. Negro members of the Southern Presbyterian Church are at present few in number and very poor. Their ministers who are often men of family, have three possible means of support before them.

1. They can work with their hands, or teach, or do other work not strictly ministerial.

2. They can rely upon the Colored Churches for a support.

3. The partial support derived from either of the above means may be supplemented by the general fund of our church. Experience shows that our colored ministers are not unwilling to work with their hands or to teach. Many of them do so labor earnestly. One of them writes that he counts it a privilege that his church allows him to labor at his trade of shoe making, in order that he may continue to preach to them. It is very evident that the more time they spend in this labor, the less will they have to devote to study and pastoral work. So it happens that our *Colored Evangelistic Fund* only carries on the work, the foundations of which are laid at Tuscaloosa Institute, by keeping the men from absolute want.

Presbyterianism Adaptable to Negroes.

The question is often asked, "Can Presbyterianism do anything for the Negroes?" This question involves another, viz.: "Does Presbyterianism preach the gospel?" That it does preach the Gospel with purity, simplicity and

power, few persons doubt. It does reach them directly and positively. In our Church, North and South, there are now more than *seventeen thousand* colored communicants. The testimony of our colored ministers shows conclusively that our doctrines and polity are slowly but surely taking hold upon them. Moreover there is a most powerful indirect influence over them. They need just what our system gives them—*regulation* of their faith and of all their performances. The training and lives of colored Presbyterian ministers do exert a most wholesome influence in raising the standard of ministerial education, and in correcting loose views as to the character and work of the ministry. Their greatest need to-day is not mere secular learning, it is a sober sense of the requirements of God's most holy law. There is no doubt that an educated and holy ministry will accomplish more towards this end than any other single human agency.

Presbyterianism every where teaches that the family is the unit of the church; that if the family be pure and holy, so will the church be. It is historically true that our church is the great champion of the home. Perhaps the greatest single deficiency in the social life of the negroes is the low conception of the obligations

Lack of Home Life. of the family life. It is by no means a universal defect, but awfully prevalent. So long as this state of affairs continues, there can be but small hope of great improvement among the masses. Christianity is needed *in their homes.* Presbyterians cannot avoid the responsibility of putting it there as soon as possible.

An Instance. The following narrative will show the power of Presbyterianism over the colored people. In Liberty County, Georgia, during 1889, there appeared amongst the colored people a white man named Bell, who announced himself as an incarnation of Christ. The historic church of Medway, now a colored church under the Northern Presbyterian Assembly, is in the county. The Rev. J. T. H. Waite, a white minister, is now pastor of this which has 633 members. He has kindly furnished the following narrative: "If the Christ craze had been then (1874), the Medway people would have been lost, if the weird white man had suddenly appeared to them, and proclaimed that he had come from God, that Christ had been in Noah to save the world before the flood, that Christ was in Moses to save the Jews, that Christ was in Jesus to save the Whites,

and now Christ was in him to save the Blacks; that the end of the world was near; they must follow him into the wilderness, encamp around him, and prepare for the new march to Cannan, as great multitudes did, coming from near and far, all around Medway, creating intense excitement and going into indescribable orgies. But Medway in 1889 was a different people from 1874. They were generally intelligent, many were educated; the dignity of the church worship was a model; their lives were reliable, as much as any white church. In 1874, nearly all were asleep in fifteen minutes after singing; in 1889, and for many years I seldom saw a sleeper, man, woman or child. Bibles, hymn book and organ were in use. The recital after me of Commandments, Creed and Prayer still went on but wonderfully impressive. In seventeen years there had never been an unpleasantness between the minister and his thousand people. In all those years only two of them had been disciplined for drunkenness.

Medway radiated five miles around the old church. The false Christ suddenly appeared on the rim of the circle. Outside and within our circle were Baptist, Methodist and Congregational Churches with negro preachers, and these were soon involved as in a maelstrom, in a seeth-

ing, reeking excitement, rushing to camp ready to fight, revelling in orgies and worshiping Bell. I did not hear of it for weeks, so calm, unconcerned and faithful was Medway. I then proved by scripture the impossibility of Christ's coming with Bell. My officers said to me, 'Moderator, don't be afraid of your church; that craze is as contemptible as it is deplorable; we can't go into such a craze now.' During all the months, not one of our thirty officers would go to look at it though so near. Our 600 members, young as well as old thought it disgraceful to be seen there. The old church seemed fuller than usual that year, and very calm and dignified. Two were caught for a while, an old man and his wife, but they came before session with regrets. An old man, one of our watchmen, living near the camp was made an imbecile by the excitement and died. And one of our bright young men, one we had educated, devoted to me and the church, was caught in the craze, and made second in command to Bell, and became his successor. But for a year before an immense tumor on his head diseased his brain. He is in the lunatic asylum. Two young men of the Congregational Church, one a son of their chief deacon, had preferred Medway, and are now in Lincoln University studying for the ministry, with others of our

young men. We have over thirty teachers in public schools.

What were the influences that saved Medway from the craze? Various, one was the leaven of Presbyterian teaching and training of old; one was having a white minister whom they respected, one of the superior race who, they knew, was sincere and earnest for their elevation; one was an educated minister, who was a teacher in the pulpit, and not a haranguer, a minister who trained them to decorum, reverence and dignity, and who could talk to the children, who was the only teacher in the Sabbath school; one was the influence of the day school in which Mrs. Waite and I have taught for seventeen years and are yet teaching; one was the sympathy, made visible, of thousands of whites North, and greatest of all was the help of the Divine Spirit in honest work."

Mr. Waite was born in New York City, came early to the South, studied theology at Columbia Seminary in the days of Howe, Leland, Jones, McGill, Palmer, Thornwell and Adjer; was called to Georgia, then to Maryland; a pastor during the war of a southern church; was brought back to Georgia by domestic affliction, and went to the Medway Mission in 1874. The negroes of that county had previously enjoyed the ministry

of such eminent men as Revs. Dr. C. C. Jones, Axson and Buttolph.

Total Result. Our work has resulted in twenty-four ministers and licentiates, thirty churches, about seven hundred members. Recently two colored Presbyteries have been organized, one in Alabama, the *Presbytery of Central Alabama*; one in Mississippi, the *Presbytery of Ethel*; these are temporarily members of our Synod. In Texas and in South Carolina, there are two *Independent Colored Presbyteries*, whose ministers are largely sustained by us.

Needs. 1. THOUGHT. We need "to think on these things." For various reasons many of us refuse to think calmly upon our religious relation to the negroes. A refusal to think frees no man from responsibility. Why has God allowed these people to be put there, and why does He allow them to remain? Think about it?

2. PRAYER. The beginning of this work and its development hitherto have been based upon the prayers of a few of God's people. What is now needed is for every christian to pray privately, and every minister publicly for God's blessing upon this work, that the Institute and

all connected with it may be baptised with the Holy Ghost; that the hearts and purses of God's people may be opened toward it; that the Home Mission Committee and the Field Secretary may be rightly guided; *above all* that the hearts of the negroes may be more and more inclined toward the gospel and toward us.

3. Consecrated Workers. Our people have need to *do something* for them. Why cannot Sabbath Schools be established and maintained by our people; there is enough unused material in our churches to accomplish wonders in this way. It is worth a trial.

4. Men. One of the most pressing needs of this work is men; there are more places than men. Our church must be careful in selecting candidates. They must be sensible and capable, but *especially they must be of good character.* Ministers and private members of the church may do much toward helping this work by looking for such men, by presenting to them the claims of the ministry, and by explaining to them our plan and methods of work. In just this way have most of our colored candidates been secured.

5. Money. The most pressing need now is money. No human enterprise can be sustained without it.

DURING THE YEARS 1889-1890.

Income.

728 Churches gave, - -	$6,063 13
25 Sabbath Schools, - -	150 86
11 Societies, - - -	88 99
Legacies amounted to, -	1,816 63
Whole amount available, -	8,844 63

This was an average of *five cents a member for our whole church.*

Expenses. It cost $3,695.00 to meet the expenses of Tuscaloosa Institute last year.

Two white and twenty-one colored ministers were aided to the amount of $1,818.24.

The expenses of this year will be *greater than those of last year by at least* $2,000.

Endowment. At least $50,000 should be raised as an endowment for the Institute, in order that the whole amount of contributions from the churches may go toward active evangelistic work.

Our Duty. It must be evident to the reader that our present operations must be greatly *enlarged* in order to meet the increasing demands made upon us. New fields are opening and old plans need enlargement. If we are to meet with large success we must establish schools. They should

Schools. be under the care of Sessions or of Presbyteries. They should be thorough Bible schools, where the scriptures are the basis of instruction, and where the pupils are indoctrinated through the Catechisms and Confession of Faith. They should be made schools for the training of character as well as for learning letters. To them should be attached means of industrial instruction.

Create a Constituency. This plan is necessary, because at present we have a very limited constituency among the negroes. Some means must therefore be adopted for the creation of patronage. For this purpose the parochial school is pre-eminently useful. The Freedmen's Board of the Northern Presbyterian Church, testifies that "The Parochial School is a necessity in building up our church work. In every instance where such a school has been established, whether in city or country, it has proved a most efficient aid in drawing attention to the work, and making friends for it. The colored people as a rule prize education, and they love the church that gives it to them." We should learn wisdom from such a pronounced piece of testimony expressing the result of years of experience.

Feeders for Tuscaloosa Institute.

It is beyond all doubt true, that the vast majority of our candidates for the ministry come from our church schools and colleges. Tuscaloosa Institute has no source of supply like other seminaries. These schools are necessary in order to secure candidates for the ministry. Some instruction in secular branches is now given in the Institute. This is necessary at present, because the men come ill-prepared. The faculty wishes to do away with this instruction, which can be done only when the men are fitted for the exclusive study of their profession at the time of their entrance into the Institute.

Mission Sabbath Schools.

No finer field for Missionary Sabbath School work can be found than among the negroes. The work will be difficult and, perhaps at the beginning, discouraging also; but persevering, consecrated effort will surely lead to excellent results.

To Sum Up.

A field for christian work rich in promise lies at our feet and stretches out before our eyes. Other churches have entered this field and have reaped large harvests. As sure as the sun

rises, the negroes will be educated. If we do not at once enter more vigorously into this work, our opportunity will pass away. Political expediency and social economy are alike powerless to regulate the relations of man to God, and of man to man. The gospel of Jesus Christ in the church, in the school, in the home, in the heart, in the life of men, be they white or be they black, can alone save us from most unhappy strife and confusion. God has made us trustees of that gospel for every lost son of Adam. Let our church arise and throw into the solution of this question her immense stores of learning, her spiritual energy accumulated through centuries of prayer, persecution and work, her evangelising power, and the quieting influences of gentle charity. A pure gospel, a holy, learned ministry, Bible schools for the cultivation of learning and piety —these shall be her offerings to her colored friends. Then shall we have discharged a measure of our duty, and can hope to see the "race question" dissolved like mist before the rising sun. Let us arise and do the Masters' will, for the night draws nigh when no man can work!

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